

A visit with Skip Taylor

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Clipper Columnist

Skip Taylor of Surplus Street and Clark's Island (not necessarily in that order) was born the weekend the schooner Mya was launched on July 4, 1940. From the maternity ward at Jordan Hospital, his mother caught sight of the largest vessel built in Duxbury in 100 years. From that moment William W. Taylor, Jr. would be "Skipper" or Skip.



Mya was built for Dr. William Carey Bumpus, Jr., by Skip's father, Bill Taylor, Sr., at his boatyard off Washington Street – now Long Point Marine. Many hands of men who would be known in decades to come worked on her construction. Mike Linde, Russell Soule and Norman White, Sr., as well as Bill Taylor himself were among those who worked on Mya's construction in a year when none of them could know that the decadelong Depression was over. (More on Mya below.)

In the world war soon to come, Bill Taylor, Sr., joined the Merchant Marine. Skip, who nowadays reads 40 books a year, insists he was an "academic underachiever." Perhaps to try to address that, when he was 16 he was sent to Worcester Academy – then as now a distinguished boarding school. He went on to the University of Kentucky where he did underachieve. In 1960 he left Kentucky, volunteered for the draft and entered U.S. Army artillery.

For many (this writer included) academics can be an affliction of adolescence. But for Skip, work was a different story. In 1966 he entered the airline industry. In 1970 he went to work as a marketing trainee at Japan Airlines, where he stayed for 35 years. Along the way, he finished college and received a degree in management from Fisher College. In 2001 he moved to General Electric Air Cargo. After he had retired, he went to work as a dock hand at the Steamship Authority, serving Martha's Vineyard and Nantucket. This led to friends who knew him only as the squire of Clark's Island doing double takes. He retired for good (he says) in 2011.

In 1970 Skip married Paula Lynch, whom Rockland Trust customers will recognize (better than they recognize her husband) as a longtime friendly presence at its Duxbury office. They were married on Clark's Island. They have two children, William, a wooden boat builder, and Jennifer, who now lives in Plymouth and works for Wiemeyer Dentistry. Jennifer has two daughters, Ella and Gianna.

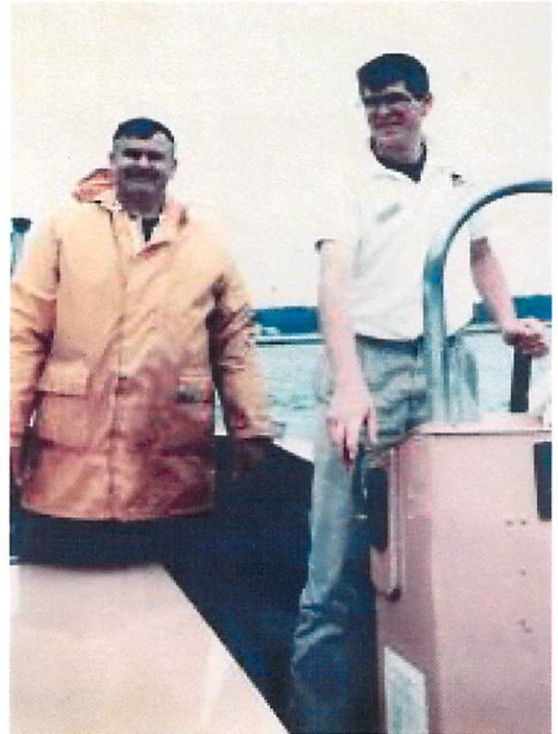
Skip's aunt was the author Sarah Wingate Taylor, who famously spent her summers on Clark's Island. She died young in 1965, and Skip inherited much of the island, including what he calls Old House – an understatement, since it dates to 1690. The Taylors are Mayflower descendants by several lines, and have been on Clark's Island since 1630. An important part of Skip's life's work is preserving the island and his family's connection to it. Transferring Sarah's house and grounds to the Duxbury Rural and Historical Society was largely his doing. The academic underachiever is currently writing a history of the island.

Another Taylor line comes through Rhode Island, and Skip serves as governor of the Rhode Island Society of Mayflower Descendants. He and 49 of his colleagues each contributed \$1,620 toward the restoration of Mayflower II. Under his leadership, the Society recently took over the physical maintenance of First Church in Plymouth. (Its Unitarian congregation will continue to use it.)

When I was a lad Mya was moored at the entrance to the Basin, where the ever-silting channel allowed the deepest draft. She was incomparably the most beautiful vessel in Snug Harbor. After Dr. Bumpus's death, she was purchased by Senator Ted Kennedy, who famously sailed her in Nantucket Sound for many years. But it should be remembered that Mya is only a thing. A famous and beautiful thing, but nonetheless still a thing. Things can be graceful looking, but grace itself comes from something else.

To my way of thinking those who built Mya, their wives and descendants defined what grace is. Mike Linde would run the Duxbury Marine Railway and Russ Soule the nearby Duxbury Coal & Lumber Company. Normie White would be captain of Ralph Thompson's very large motor yacht, Blue Goose, before becoming captain of the waterfront at the Duxbury Yacht Club. To young troublemakers of my generation he was the Old Testament god.

As to Skip Taylor, he is a member of American Legion Post 223, Cornerstone Lodge, among other local organizations. But can't be called a joiner. He chases trespassers away from Old House and doesn't like to call attention to himself. But his life's work, here touched on, is what I think of as grace.



Skip Taylor and son William in 1990.

Photo courtesy Skip Taylor